



All in for Sport

Trans Youth Experiences in Sports and Recreation

By Seth Wahlin-Stern on behalf of the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project* (NSRAP)

Date of Report: August 31, 2018

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Survey development and data collection.....	3
Participant recruitment	4
Demographic Snapshot.....	6
Demographics in Detail.....	7
Results Overview.....	10
Results and Discussion.....	11
Physical activity	
Frequency.....	11
Enjoyment.....	12
Change Rooms	
Stress Level.....	13
Avoidance of.....	14
Preference.....	15
School Experiences	
School Staff.....	16
Stress level by location.....	17
Coping Strategies.....	19
Coming Out* Experiences.....	20
Support Systems	
Youth Needs.....	21
Support Network.....	23
Barriers / Facilitators to Participation.....	24
Conclusion.....	25
Future Research.....	25
Considerations for youth programming.....	27
Glossary.....	29
References.....	30

Introduction

All in for Sport stemmed from a much different project which I was involved with in my former role with as Chair of the Health Committee with 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy group the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project. All in for Sport was inspired by conversations I have had with trans youth and adults over the past few years about peoples' experiences with sports and recreation. This project is dedicated to all those who have ever been distanced from a physical activity they love for reasons of gender, and to the people we don't see on the sports field or in the gymnasium due to reasons related to gender.

I am pleased to acknowledge the support of so many people who have contributed to this work. Firstly, to the youth who shared their experiences, this project would not have been possible without your input. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of past and current NSRAP board members for their attendance at meetings about this project, for helping to advertise the project, and for help with proofreading and book-keeping. Emma Carter, a School Psychology student, was present during the information session, and assisted with material preparation and data entry. Emma brought much positive energy to the project and she was willing to assist well beyond the length of time originally asked of her. Thank-you to Noreen Guptil of Halifax Parks and Recreation who assisted with room space, connected me with others, and for her creative and practical solutions when problems arose. All in for Sport was supported by the Nova Scotia Health Authority Central Community Health Board. The words of Jennifer, the Health Board member who spoke with me during the project, rang in my ear at times throughout this project: 'It's normal when community work doesn't go as planned, don't give up.' Lastly, the Youth Project summer camp where data collection occurred is run largely by adult volunteers who are transgender along with the staff who work as part of the non-profit organization. Thank-you to all of these individuals and groups.

The purpose of All in For Sport is:

- To describe experiences with physical activity among trans youth
- To identify barriers/facilitators to physical activity for trans youth
- To provide first-person perspectives to coaches, Phys-ed. teachers, and others
- To spark future work about transgender people and physical activity

Methodology

Survey development

Survey questions were based on several sources. These sources included: anecdotal information, sections of the provincial Physical Education curriculum, feedback from sport/rec professionals, and past research. The main source of inspiration was experiences that trans youth and adults have shared with me over the past few years. Since many of these conversations occurred in support-based settings, I wondered if I may have heard an over-representation of difficult stories. However, the experiences shared with me mirrored those shared in more general settings such as Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSA)*, and the summer camp for trans youth at which I volunteered for the past two years.

*See glossary

Some survey questions were based on the Nova Scotia Curriculum Outcomes for Physical Education¹. These outcomes include skills within dance, gymnastics, games, and other active pursuits. I was curious whether youth's enjoyment changed depending on who else participated or where these activities were held i.e. alone, with friends, with other youth in the community vs. at school, and with other 2SLGBTQ youth in the community vs. at school.

Consultations were held with several professionals who work in the area of sports/recreation. We discussed how survey results might apply and what questions I might include to gather the most practical data. The people I spoke with were: Mary Veinotte, Extracurricular Sport Coordinator with the Halifax Regional Centre for Education, Dustin Boudreau, Schools Plus Sport Animator, and Noreen Guptil, Inclusion and Accessibility Specialist and Sharon Martin, Manager of Youth Programs, both with Halifax Parks & Recreation. Suggestions I received included: probing for specific 'facilitators' or concrete suggestions from youth to help illustrate what youth thought could be done to tackle any issues that they identified; curriculum-related content; identifying potential programming options of interest to 2SLGBTQ+ youth; inclusion of open-ended questions regarding youth experiences in different settings; and asking for youth's ideas of what constitutes a welcoming space. In addition to these specific ideas, stakeholders expressed a general interest in first-person voices in this area that could complement information already collected, and inform training for coaches, Phys-ed teachers, policy developers or others working in the area of sports/rec.

I did not conduct a formal literature review in the area of trans youth and participation in sports/rec. I hope the information presented here may be taken up by a student or researcher and studied further. I did add one question based on a recent survey of trans youth² in which youth were asked to rate their stress level in various locations of the school. I added the location "Gymnasium" to the list of locations included in the earlier study.

I acknowledge that as a trans person I carry my own set of biases related to my personal experiences in sports and recreation settings. I have tried to consider a range of perspectives and possibilities outside my own experiences, and to include open-ended survey questions when possible to try to mitigate the impact of these biases.

Participant recruitment

For three nights and four days each year, a large mess hall and a sundrenched barn in rural Nova Scotia are transformed into a central gathering place for transgender youth from across the province. In the middle of camp sit a sports field, a basketball court, a beach volleyball court, and a baseball diamond. It was in this setting that I arrived in August 2018 ready to help in the kitchen armed with kitchen supplies and a large volume of the surveys which form the bulk of this report.

Prior to this I had encountered challenges with participant recruitment. In March/April 2018, a student in the School Psychology program and I had attempted to recruit trans youth for a series of five discussions about their experiences in sport/rec. The incentive for participation was free food and a swim open only to trans youth, with bus tickets provided. To advertise, I plastered

*See glossary

hard copies of event posters in local libraries and recreation centres. I also emailed information about the event to Guidance Counselors, African Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaq Student Support Workers in schools near the community centre. The sessions were also advertised on social media by local 2SLGBTQ+ organizations. No youth had registered on social media for the first session, which was “snowed out” anyway. Given the lack of response on social media, for what would have been the second session we re-named it an information session and broadened the audience to anyone who wanted to learn more about the project. The School Psychology student was present at Needham rec centre and distributed information to those who passed by, which included a few adults who had come to learn more about the project and a group of youth who were exiting the centre after a practice. The next session was advertised and the room was prepared. Again, no youth showed up to participate and no rsvp's were sent on social media. At this point, we opted to cancel the room booking at the rec centre and consider alternate ways to complete the project. In hindsight, the prospect of coming to a sport/rec setting to talk about past experiences in that setting may have repelled people had they had negative past experiences. The prospect of swimming in a public pool with strangers – even at a ‘trans only’ swim – may also have been a disincentive. A place was needed where trans youth were likely to gather and feel comfortable. The youth camp presented such an opportunity.

On the second full day at camp, I described the project to all youth while they were assembled in the dining hall. The purpose of this survey was described as such: to support health/wellness of Nova Scotians who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. Youth were told that a summary of the responses would be shared with organizations and others upon request, and the information may be used in future research, to develop education for coaches and Phys-ed teachers, and to develop programming for youth for example. Youth were told that a donation of \$10 would be made to The Youth Project for each completed survey. Youth were told that participation was entirely voluntary and they could choose not to answer any question or withdraw participation at any time. Youth completed the survey over the lunch time that day. Later in the day, a half-hour focus group was held with the 6 youth who had opted for a sports activity that afternoon. Youth were asked whether information could be summarized in general, and to approach the undersigned if there was any information they did not want included; no youth approached the undersigned or expressed concerns about the general discussion being shared. Results from the focus group are summarized within the sections that correspond to topics raised.

Demographic Snapshot

32 Total survey respondents

13 Age 11 – 14

15 Age 15 – 17

4 Age 18 – 21

5 Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour

0 Newcomers to Canada

26 Reside in Nova Scotia

6 Reside outside Nova Scotia

21 Male or masculine gender identity*

8 Non-binary* or non-binary female gender identity

1 Transgender* gender identity

2 Did not report gender identity

8 Pansexual*

5 Did not report sexual orientation

4 Queer*

4 Bisexual

3 Gay or homosexual

2 Straight

2 Panromantic asexual*

1 Unknown

1 Abrosexual*

1 Androsexual*

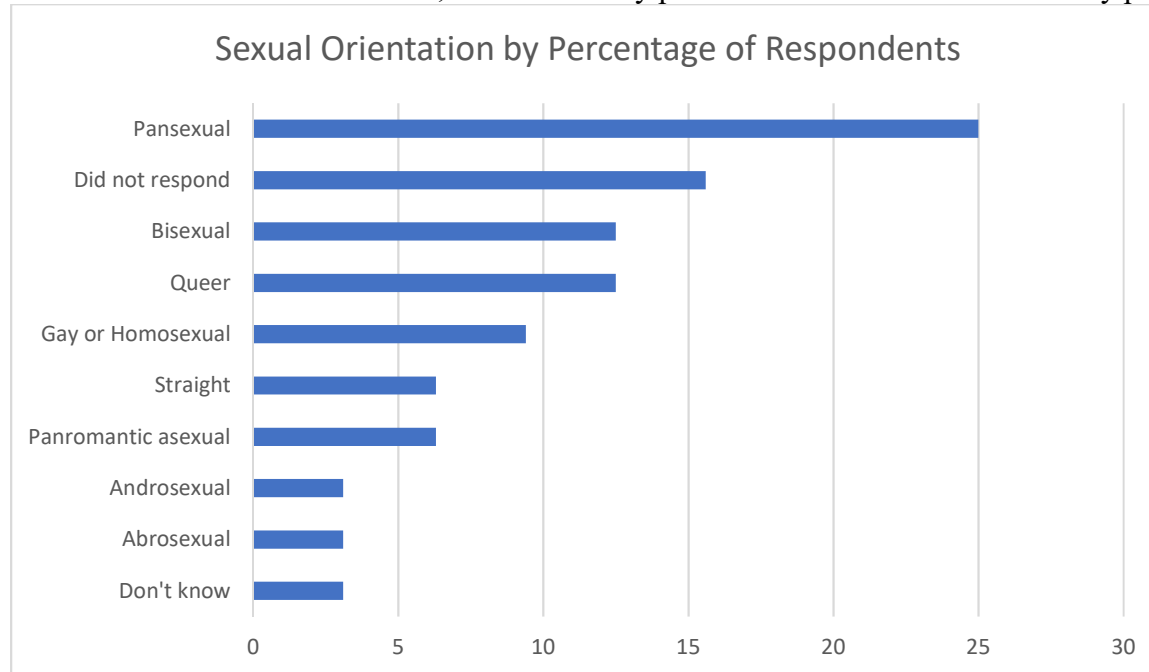
1 Drew a picture of a rainbow

Demographics in Detail

Demographic information is summarized in this section. Youth were asked about age, race, place of residence, whether they were a newcomer to Canada, sexual orientation, and gender identity. All surveys and the focus group were collected on August 10, 2018.

Thirty-two youth responded to the survey out of a possible thirty-seven who attended the camp. Youth who attended the camp ranged in age from 12 – 19, with most youth being between the ages of 13 and 17. Survey respondents were asked how old they were in September 2017. Youth were split fairly evenly between those who were 15 – 17 in September 2017 (46.9%) and those who indicated they were 11 – 14 (40.6%). Lastly, 12.5% reported they were 18 – 21. Most respondents (81.3%) reported they usually live in Nova Scotia; the remainder came from within the Maritimes. No one reported they were a newcomer to Canada within the last five years. Just over 15% of participants (five youth) reported they were black, Indigenous, or a person of colour.

Terms used to describe sexual orientation refer simultaneously to the person’s gender identity and that of the object(s) of their attraction and do so from within a binary perspective. For instance, the term “lesbian” denotes a woman who is attracted to another woman. These terms have limited usefulness for people who either themselves fall outside the gender binary or who are attracted to a person or people who fall outside the gender binary. Traditional terms do not capture e.g. a trans woman who is attracted to people of all genders, a non-binary person who is attracted to both men and women, or a non-binary person attracted to other non-binary people.

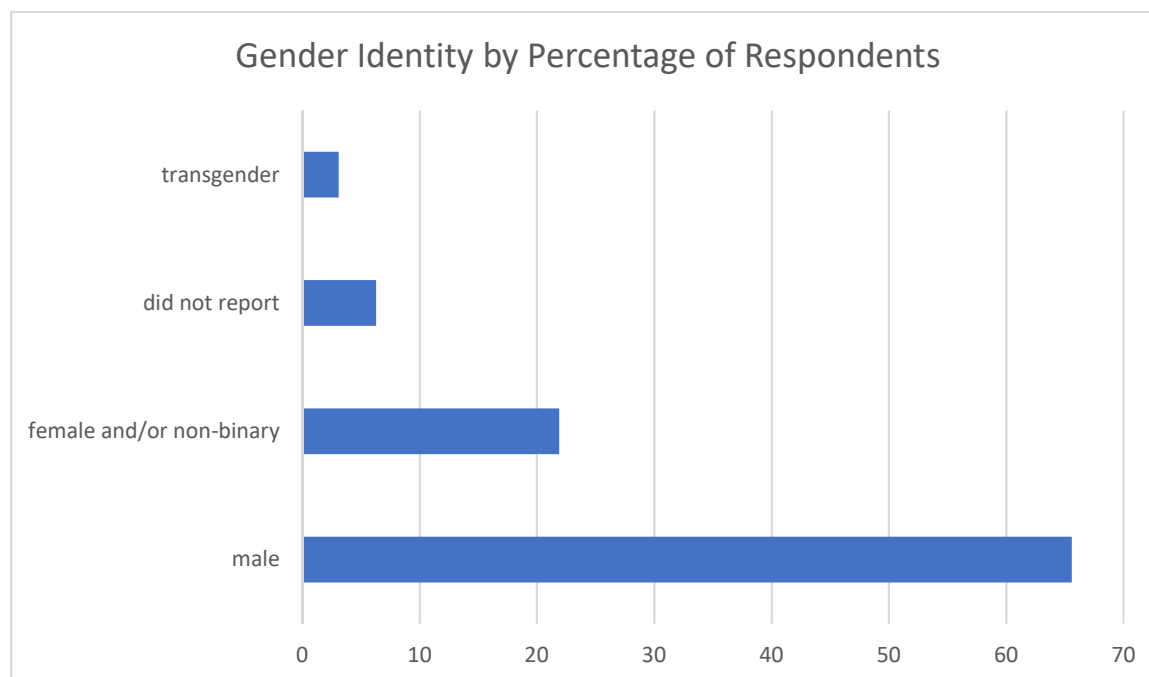


Among survey respondents, the most common term used to describe sexual orientation was pansexual*, with eight respondents (25%) using this label. The next most common response was to leave the question blank, chosen by five people (16%). Two respondents included the term

*See glossary

demisexual in their response, which indicates a bond or connection is a necessary pre-requisite condition for sexual attraction. One respondent drew a picture.

Three questions pertained to gender identity. These were: “my gender identity is ____”. A second question asked, “other people use the pronouns* I identify with [1-Never 5-All the time]”. Participants were also asked, “when people use the wrong pronoun for me they usually call me [he, she, he or she happen about the same, other]”.

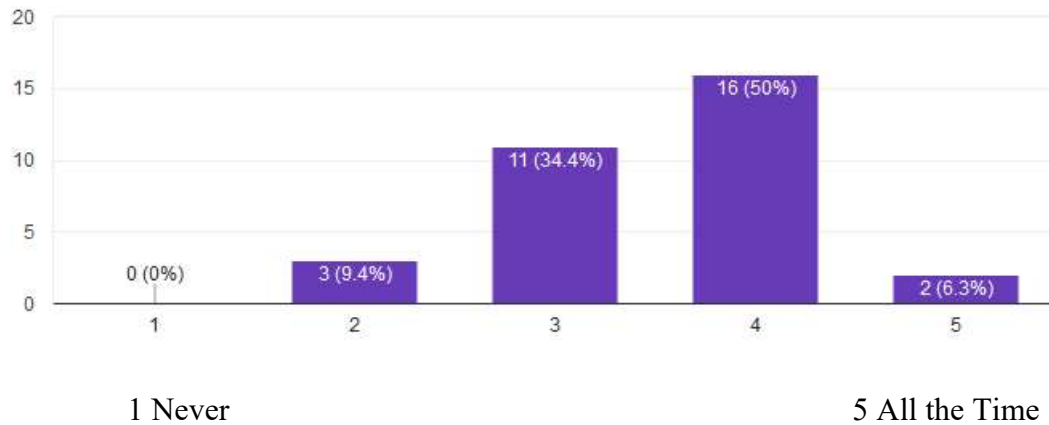


Within the group categorized as male, two youth described themselves as trans masculine. The others used the following terms: male, trans male, trans man, FTM, and trans boy. Within the group categorized as female and/or non-binary there were a total of seven youth. Of these, two respondents included female or woman in their title as well as the terms gender fluid or NB (short for non-binary). No youth described their gender identity as exclusively female. Among the other youth in this group, four wrote “non-binary” while one indicated they were genderfluid.

The large number of trans masculine youth begs the question, how reflective of the general population of trans youth are survey participants? In a recent survey² of close to 1000 trans youth across Canada, it was reported that “Nearly three quarters of trans youth in our survey were assigned female at birth. This could be because trans female and transfeminine youth might be more marginalized in our society, and so harder to reach, for example, if they are less connected to community organizations. Older trans youth were more likely to have been assigned male at birth (29% compared to 18% of younger participants), and trans youth in Québec were also more likely to have been assigned male at birth (45% compared to 26% overall in Canada)” (Page 13).

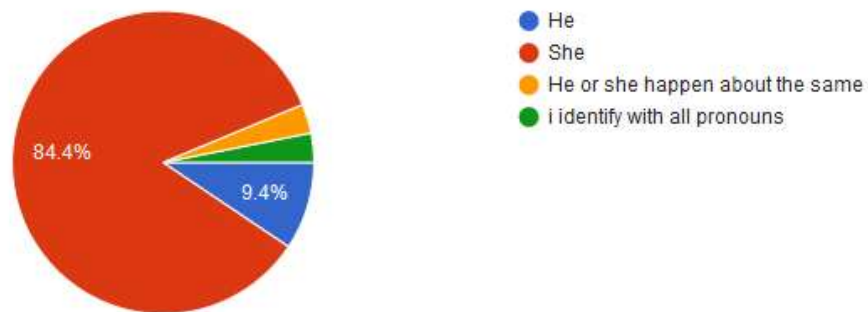
People use the pronouns I identify with

32 responses



If people use the wrong pronoun for me, they usually call me

32 responses



I included this question to give a sense of how others 'read' the youth and thus which social influences they might have experienced most consistently. This question does not tell us which gender(s) the youth identifies with, or the length of time they have been 'read' a certain way.

Results Overview

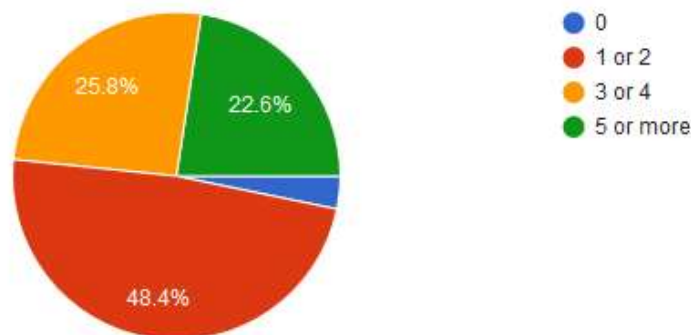
Topic	Questions	Page Numbers
Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average hours per week of physical activity • Enjoyment of dance, gymnastics, active games, and other active pursuits under different circumstances. Is there anything that would increase your enjoyment of these? 	<p>11</p> <p>11 – 13</p>
Change Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How stressed are you in a shared change room? • Have you ever refused or avoided an activity because of the change room? • What does your ideal change room look like? 	<p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>14-16</p>
School Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How comfortable are you telling your Phys Ed. Teacher something general that happened in class? Something specific to sexual orientation or gender identity? • Focus group discussion • How safe do you feel in different locations in the school? • How do you usually cope if you feel unsafe? 	<p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>17-18</p> <p>18-19</p>
Coming Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pros and cons of coming out: hypothetical • Pros and cons of coming out: actual 	<p>19-20</p> <p>20</p>
Support Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does a welcoming space for 2SLGBTQ+ youth look like to you? • I would participate more if... • Something I need to feel comfortable at sports/rec is.... • What stops you from being more active? What helps you be more active? 	<p>20-21</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23-25</p>

Results & Discussion

Physical activity Frequency

How many hours per week are you physically active, on average?

31 responses

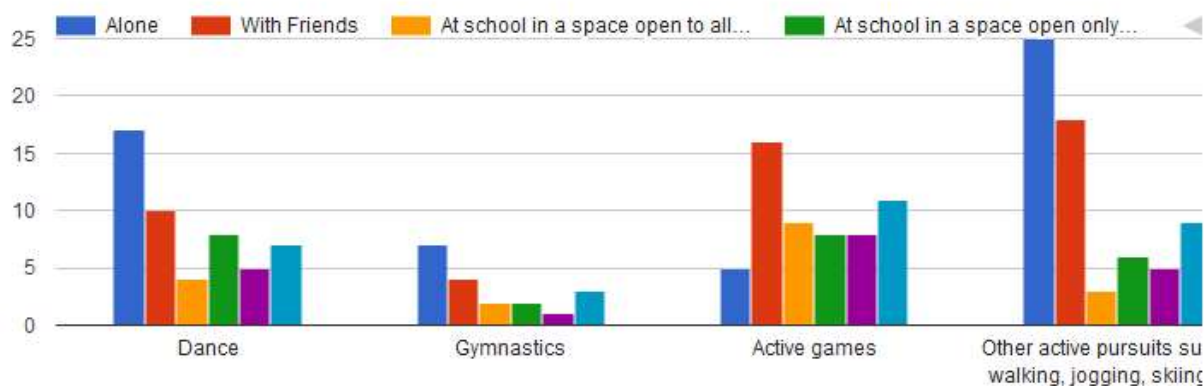


Previous research² suggests that at least two thirds of younger trans youth do not engage in extra curriculars or sports organized through the school, and most (96%) reported that they never participated in physical activities with a coach that were organized outside of school² (Being Safe Being Me, Page 24). Data from the current survey suggest higher rates of physical activity, with nearly half of youth indicating that they are physically active for 1 – 2 hours per week, and another quarter each reporting 3 – 4 hours and 5+ hours. Stats Can reports youth 12 – 17 engage in 41 minutes per day (girls) to 55 minutes per day (boys) on average³. Thus, the trans youth appear to report lower rates of physical activity.

Physical activity Enjoyment

The following chart shows total NUMBER of respondents, not percentage of respondents. The coloured bars indicate who else is present and in what setting. Dark Blue: alone; Red: with friends, Yellow: At school in a space open to all youth; Green: at school in a space open only to other 2SLGBTQ+ youth; Purple: in the community in a space open to all youth; and Light Blue: in the community in a space open only to other 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

I like to....(check all that apply)



See descriptions of coloured bars on page 11. At school and in the community, a greater number of trans youth reported that they enjoyed dancing and active pursuits in a space with only other 2SLGBTQ+ youth present compared to a space with all youth present. When it comes to active games, more trans youth reported at school that they enjoy playing with all youth, while in the community more trans youth reported they enjoy playing with only other 2SLGBTQ+ youth. It seems likely that youth have a greater opportunity overall to participate in ‘mixed’ environments i.e. a mixture of cisgender* and transgender people. The writer is aware of only a couple of recreation programs for youth that are targeted at 2SLGBTQ+ youth, and very few of these are current/ongoing to the author’s knowledge. These included a drop-in program led by a personal trainer run through The Youth Project and a drop-in basketball group run by community members. The Youth Project also offers an annual ‘Queer Prom’ featuring a dance held towards the end of the school year. A greater number of youth indicated they would enjoy doing dance and active pursuits in a space open only to other 2SLGBTQ+ youth. Note: statistical comparisons were not carried out therefore differences may or may not be significant.

It appears that active pursuits were the most popular form of activity for trans youth, with 25 people reporting they engage in active pursuits alone, and another 18 reporting they do so with friends. Few youth indicated that they enjoyed gymnastics in any circumstance. It also appears that in general, more trans youth enjoy physical activities alone or with friends.

Is there anything that would increase your enjoyment in any of the above activities?

22 responses

Seventeen youth provided additional information. Reasons can be grouped into reasons related to gender identity, treatment by others, breaks/accommodations, friends, and other. Most reasons (10) related to gender and/or treatment by others. These were:

Safer and more comfortable binders.

For adults who are facilitating to be better educated on trans youth.

Gender and/or treatment by others continued...

Not being forced into the female change rooms

If the activities were not separated by gender.

Less cissexist pressure (playing like a girl, etc. etc.)

A total lack of jackasses

People being less judgemental of my abilities.

Being respected by teachers and other youth. I'm shoved around or made fun of and it makes me want to curl up and die.

An understanding crowd.

People judge me quite a lot at my school and it makes me uncomfortable

Three reasons pertained to need for breaks/adaptations:

being able to take breaks without feeling bad

Not being forced to participate while being worn out / sick / etc.

More respect for people who need breaks, adaptations, etc.

Other reasons included:

Just having people to do it with!

Having friends who also enjoy physical activity/will motivate me.

If everyone no matter who they are has fun

Less aggressiveness.

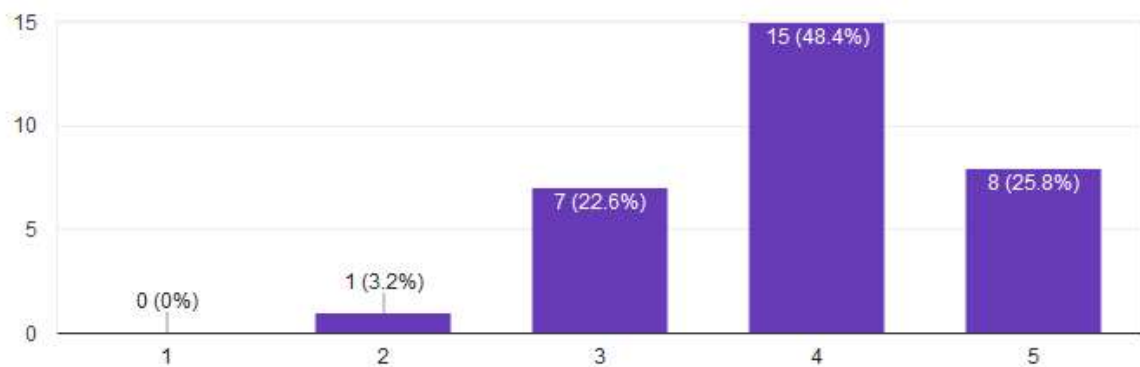
Confidence.

Changerooms

Stress Level

My stress level in a single sex shared change room is usually:

31 responses



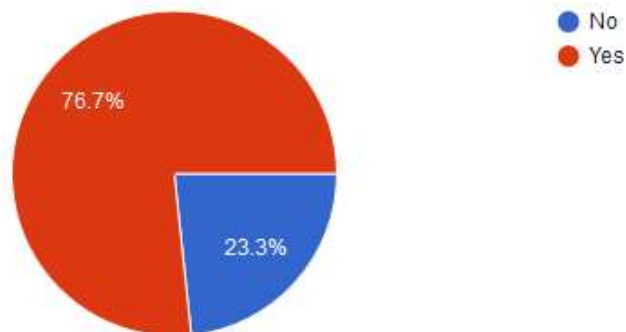
1=totally chill

5 = panic

Change Rooms Avoidance of

Have you ever avoided or refused to participate in an activity because you did not want to deal with using a shared change room?

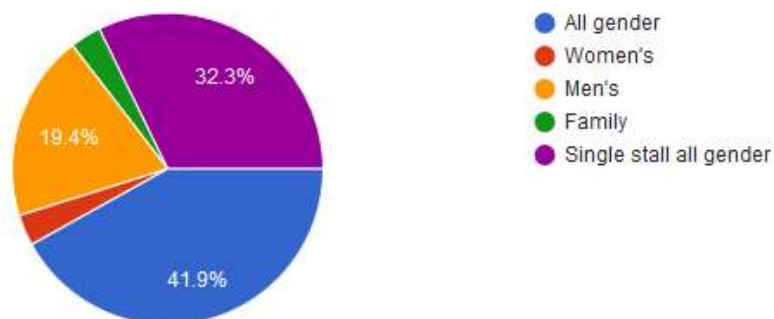
30 responses



Change Rooms Preference

On the outside, the sign on my ideal change room says:

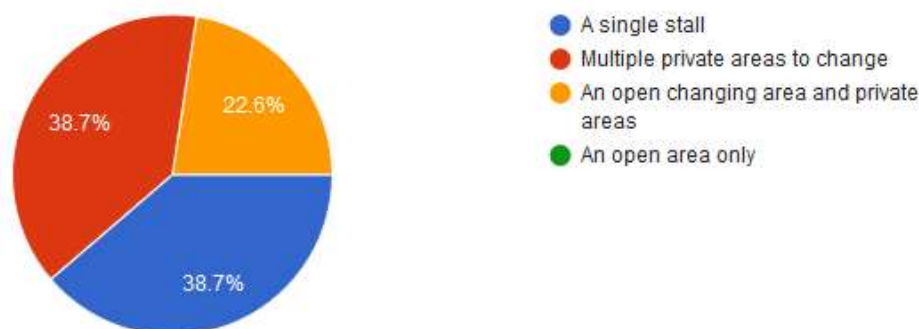
31 responses



The majority of youth surveyed (just over 65%) of youth identified as male/masculine. Despite this, only 19.4% indicated their ideal changeroom would be marked 'Men's'. Most youth reported their ideal changeroom would be marked all gender, or single stall all gender.

On the inside, my ideal change room has:

31 responses



All respondents indicated that, ideally, a changeroom would have one or more private areas to change rather than just an open space. Outside the context of this project, youth have commented to me that sometimes the single stall options at school are farther from the Gymnasium than the larger shared changerooms, or that they feel awkward to use a different washroom than most others. It would have been interesting to add questions to ask how youth would feel to use their ‘ideal changeroom’ in these circumstances e.g. if it was farther from the gymnasium and set off from the other changerooms.

Staff can support washroom/change room access by ‘normalizing’ the single stall washroom, for instance by pointing out the location of the single stall washroom to all incoming students/members as part of the building tour. It may not be obvious which students/clients are trans – or who may prefer to use a single stall washroom for other reasons – therefore it is important to point out the single stall washroom location to all. Staff can also help by ensuring that signage is equally visible. For instance, if a person can see the larger washrooms from the building lobby, post a sign that is also visible from the lobby for the single stall washroom. Staff also need to consider how easy it is to enter the single stall washroom. In the Halifax Shopping Centre for instance there are family washrooms by the food court, but these are kept locked. This is a good example of a barrier to accessibility. The Alderney Gate public library used to require a key from the information desk to access the single stall washrooms, however, this is no longer the case and there is now easier access.

I have heard school staff express concerns about student safety with access to a locked single washroom. These concerns seem to centre on the possibility that students might engage in sexual activity in the single washroom. By this logic, all school washrooms might be kept locked, since I have also heard school staff report that students have engaged in sexual activity in the larger multi-stall ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ washrooms. Issues around student sexual conduct seem in my opinion best approached through comprehensive sexual health education rather than attempting the impossible task of restricting access to private spaces in a building. I heard one story of a Principal who kept all the keys to the single stall washroom. This seems like an unnecessary use of time for both the Principal and the student(s) involved! I have also heard on more than one

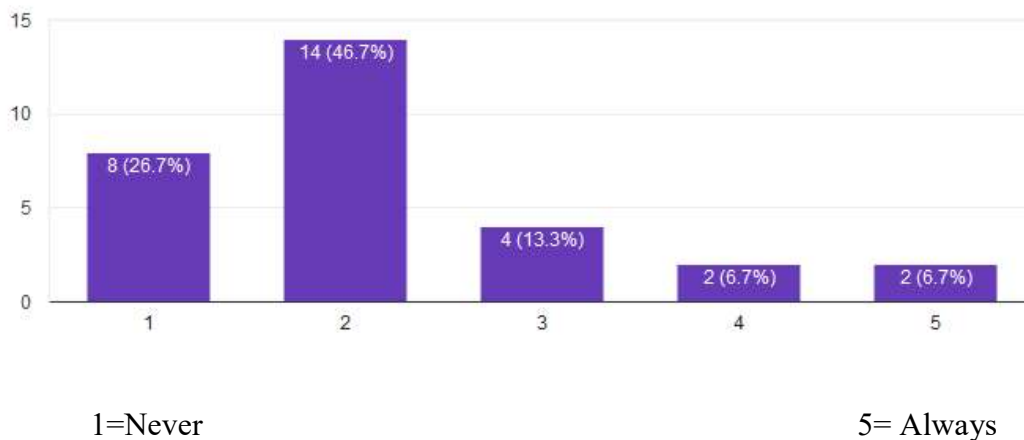
occasion of a student eventually missing some time from school related to issues with washroom access, which could have been prevented with easier access to single stall washrooms e.g. better locations or more ready access.

School Experiences

School Staff

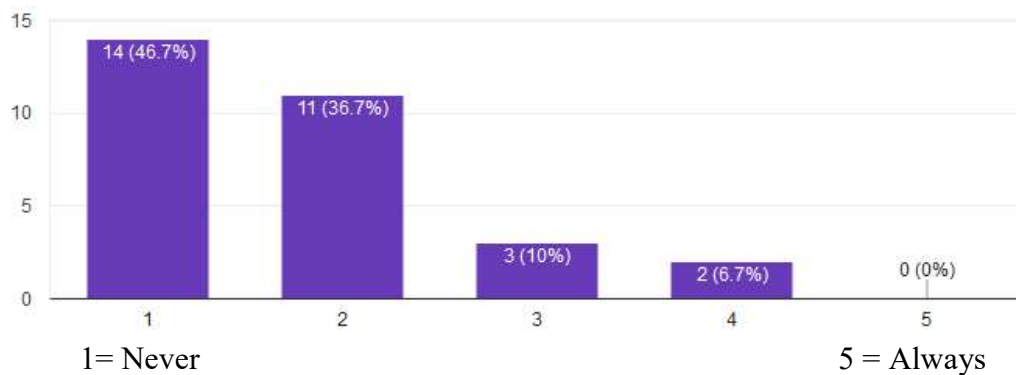
How comfortable would you feel to tell your Phys-Ed teacher something general that happened with other students during a sport/rec activity? (e.g. if another student was breaking the rules, or if you weren't sure how to play how comfortable would you be to go to the Phys-ed teacher?)

30 responses



How comfortable would you feel to tell your Phys-Ed teacher something which happened related to your sexual orientation or gender identity? (e.g. if another student made a homophobic or transphobic comment, or if you wanted other students to know how you identify, how comfortable would you be to discuss it with the teacher?)

30 responses



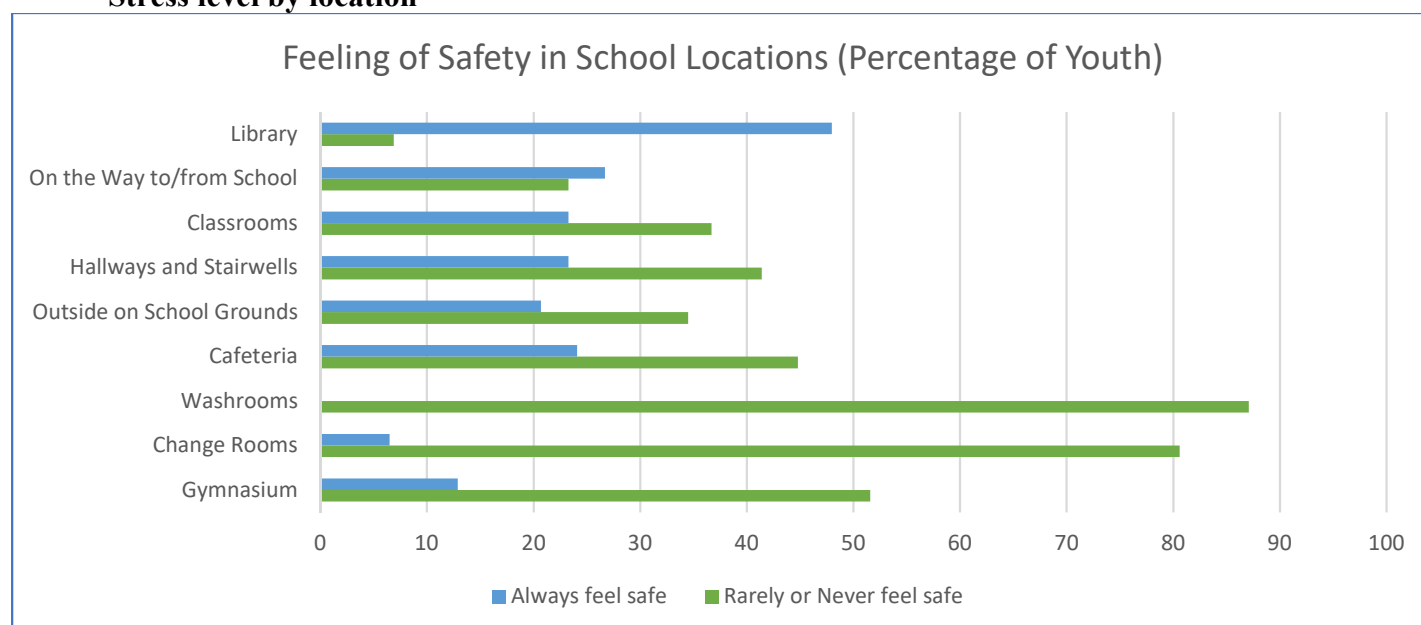
Within the focus group setting, much of the conversation spontaneously turned towards youth experiences at school. Several youth shared negative experiences which ranged from not being allowed to play on a team of their identified gender, to physical violence and ongoing, co-ordinated bullying from peers. One youth reported their Phys-ed teacher was more lenient towards students who were more popular and allowed them to ‘get away with’ more. One youth reported that the Phys-ed teacher at their school encouraged ‘boys vs. girls’ games. Youth expressed they felt that Phys-ed teachers did not take transphobic comments seriously. Youth commented that if a student was sent to the office, the student on the receiving end of the comment/action may risked being labelled a ‘snitch,’ and the student sent to the office may then do something to ‘get back at’ the other youth. Youth expressed they would prefer for the Phys-ed teacher to deal with incidents directly rather than referring the offending student to the office.

Youth gave examples of Principal’s actions which had been supportive and other examples of actions which had not been supportive. Youth acknowledged that the climate in the school could change significantly with the arrival of a new Principal, and issues which had previously been difficult e.g. access to keys for a single stall washroom, could quickly resolve. One youth gave an example of a school Principal who denied that any transgender students attended the school. When asked about past experiences where teasing or bullying that had been resolved well, one youth described a process of sharing the bullying they experienced with several support people including parent and Guidance counselor, and the necessity of a serious consequence – threat of suspension - for the other youth involved before the bullying stopped.

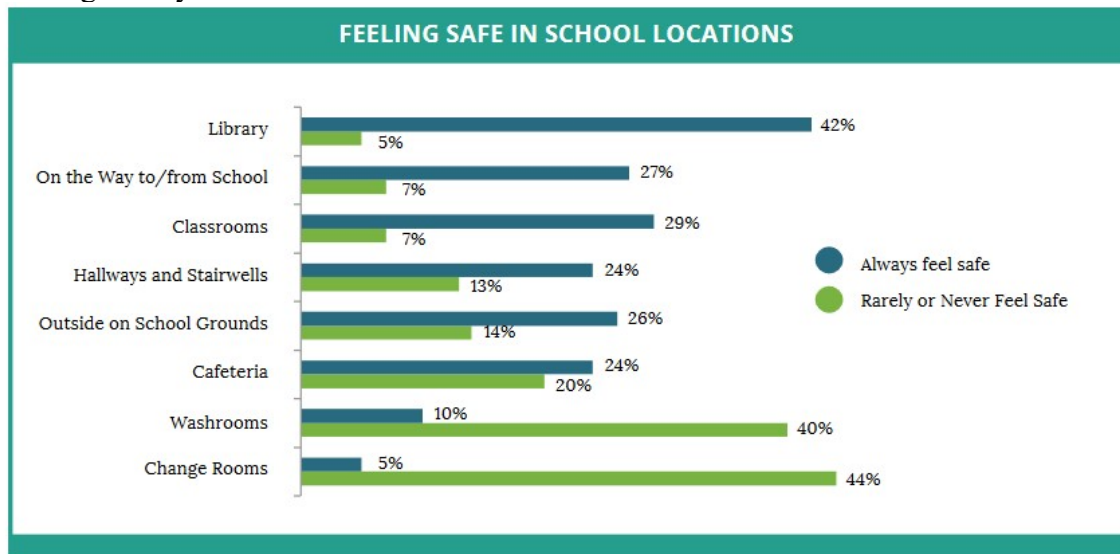
The Executive Director of the Youth Project was present during this discussion and commented to me afterwards that she has heard many similar stories from youth over her time at The Youth Project.

School Experiences

Stress level by location

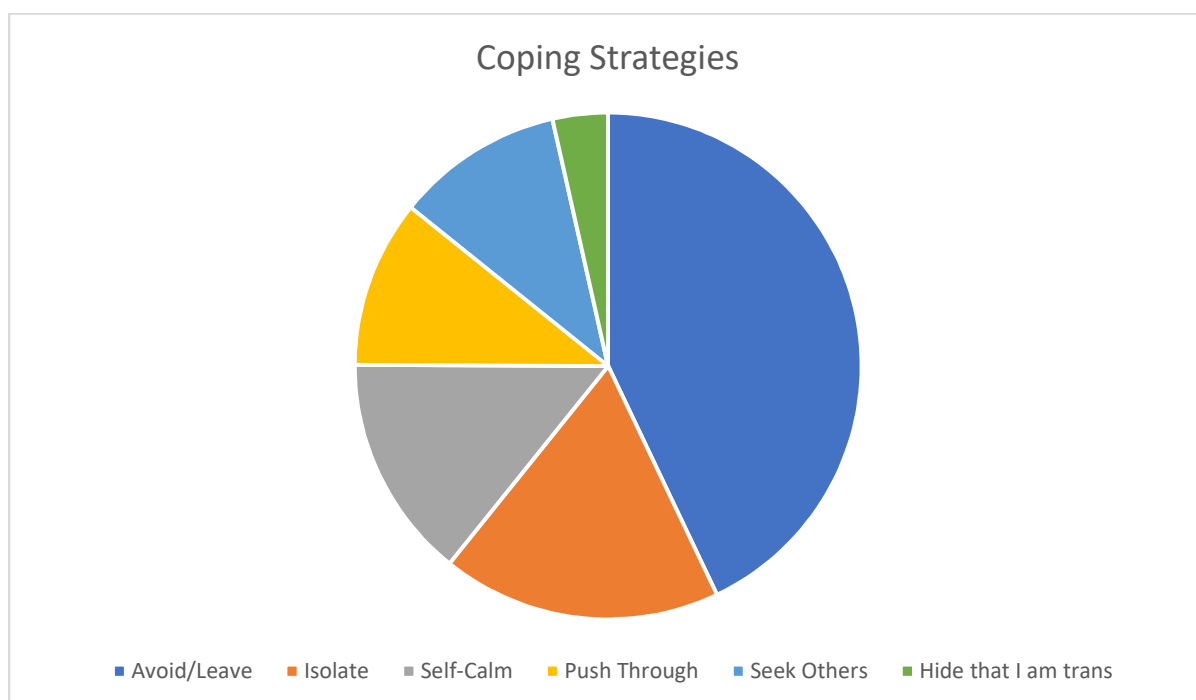


For comparison, the Being Safe Being Me survey² presented the following results from a survey of transgender youth across Canada.



Compared to Being Safe Being Me, a higher percentage of youth in the current survey appear to report that they rarely/never feel safe in classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, washrooms, and changerooms. The addition of ‘Gymnasium’ reveals that about half of trans youth rarely or never feel safe in the Gymnasium compared to about a third who rarely-never feel safe in the classroom. Just under 13% of respondents reported they always feel safe in the Gymnasium while just over 23% reported always feeling safe in the classroom.

School Experiences Coping Strategies



Youth were asked how they usually coped if they felt unsafe in a school location. Twenty-eight youth replied. Coping strategies were categorized into those that involved leaving/avoiding vs. those that focused on staying in the space. A few youth indicated multiple strategies. Of those in the avoid/leave group, two youth noted they would leave as part of a break. Three indicated they would avoid the space and seven reported they would leave. Another category of responses seemed to be those in which youth remained in the space but isolated themselves. Sample responses in this group include “I just sit and make myself as invisible as possible,” and “shut myself off from any social interaction”. Five youth responses fell in this category. Self-calming strategies were reported by four youth e.g. listening to music, “breathe and try to stay calm”, or to think about past experiences and realize it is getting better. Two youth reported seeking company of friends and one reported going to the School Counselor; these three were grouped under the category ‘seek others’. Three youth reported they push through e.g. “I just deal with it”. One reported to go “stealth” (in other words, did not reveal trans status) in order to maintain safety.

The percentage who reported they avoid/leave may seem high. However, in a situation in which one feels unsafe, leaving or avoiding could be considered a protective, adaptive strategy in that it would maintain safety and reduce stress levels. Avoidance of public spaces by trans people has been previously documented⁴. The very presence of only two changeroom or washroom options may evoke stress for a trans person, since the changeroom/washroom can be seen as a physical representation of an entire system of thought which traditionally excludes trans people. This male/female binary is present in many everyday activities and social interactions, often coupled with consequences for those who transgress gender norms.

Coming Out Experiences

Think about a team or activity where you have not come out a) Please describe any 'pros' or good things that might happen if you come out

16 responses

Half of the youth left this question blank. Of those who replied, the greatest numbers of youth described feeling more comfortable and supported. Responses included:

Feeling more comfortable, open or trusting (6 youth)
Support, being called by name and pronouns (4 youth)
Being able to believe in myself (1 youth)
Understanding I need to go slow because of binder (1 youth)
If I had trans related issues it would be easier to explain (1 youth)

In regards to support, one youth wrote, “If people don’t know I’m queer, they don’t know how to support me”.

b) Please describe any 'cons' or negatives that might happen if you come out

16 responses

Half of the youth left this question blank. Youth described possible cons of coming out on a spectrum from feeling uncomfortable to being assaulted. Responses were:

Negative reactions from others e.g. harassment, bullying, ridicule, being 'targeted,' being hated by coach (9 youth)

Different treatment such as awkward stares/glances (3 youth)

Invalidation, misgendering*, lack of acceptance (3 youth)

Getting beat up or assaulted (2 youth)

Kicked off teams, social isolation (2 youth)

Rumours can start if someone finds out then it might get twisted (1 youth)

Parents getting angry (1 youth)

Now, think about a team or activity where you have come out. a) Please describe any 'pros' or positives about coming out

13 responses

Over half of youth left these questions blank. Of those who replied, two youth provided only positives. Three youth provided only negatives. Four youth provided both positives and negatives.

The following responses were indicated:

Being seen as the gender you identify with/be myself (4 youth) e.g. "coaches use correct name," "other people perceive me as I want to be"

Acceptance e.g. "Feeling a part of the team," "They were extremely accepting and the dynamic didn't change at all" (3 youth)

Weight lifted off shoulders/not hiding who I am (2 youth)

b) Please describe any 'cons' or negatives about coming out

14 responses

Encounters with heteronormativity or cis-normativity (2 youth) e.g. "Having to pick between 'boy' or 'girl'" and "Girls assume I'm attracted to them and talk about me when I'm not around"

Discrimination, backlash from peers (2 youth)

Being asked personal questions about transition (1 youth)

Being misgendered (1 youth)

Teacher didn't care (1 youth)

Support Systems Youth Needs

What does a welcoming space for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth look like to you?

16 responses

Responses were grouped into three categories: those that pertained to gender explicitly, those that referred to acceptance and lack of judgement in general, and other. In the first group, youth wrote: “They don’t do ‘boys/girls’ teams and rooms,” “no washroom gender restrictions,” “single stall change rooms, and gender neutral bathrooms,” “no separation of genders,” and “non gender assigned sport teams, ungendered changerooms”. Six youth wrote about acceptance and a non-judgemental place e.g. “everyone is accepted, no assumptions,” “A place where people regardless of race, gender, sexuality or religion can hang out and socialize,” “non prejudice people, no tolerance for prejudice,” and “A place where everyone can freely express themselves without worry”. Remaining responses were: “flags and info,” “just chill,” “somewhere without cishet men, usually,” and “bunch of gay buds”.

Within the focus group setting, when youth were asked what a welcoming space looked like to them, the responses focused on normalization of treatment, lack of transphobia, and prompt and consistent response by adults in charge if transphobic incidents or statements occurred. Several youth expressed that they ‘just want to be treated like everybody else’. Youth also specified they did not want people ‘talking behind my back’ or ‘staring at my body’. Youth shared that in their experience, negative treatment such as this could occur from peers but also from adults.

Please answer the following question: I would participate in _____ (physical activity) more if _____.

14 responses

Youth responses fell into four broad groups: how others acted or saw the youth (6 youth), youth’s own feelings (3 youth), who else present (2 youth), and required attire (2 youth). The activities named by youth were sports, gym class, swimming, rugby, badminton, lacrosse, and martial arts. Sample responses are quoted below.

Responses related to how others acted or perceived the youth e.g. “...lacrosse...if trans people were more welcome”, “...everything...if I was seen as an everyday guy”, “...gym class...if people stopped laughing at me”, “...sports...if people stopped staring at my chest or hips”, or “...sports...if people were less rude”.

Responses related to how the youth felt e.g. “sports/gym...if I wasn’t intimidated by others”, “swimming...if I felt more comfortable in my body”, and “...badminton...if I wasn’t scared”.

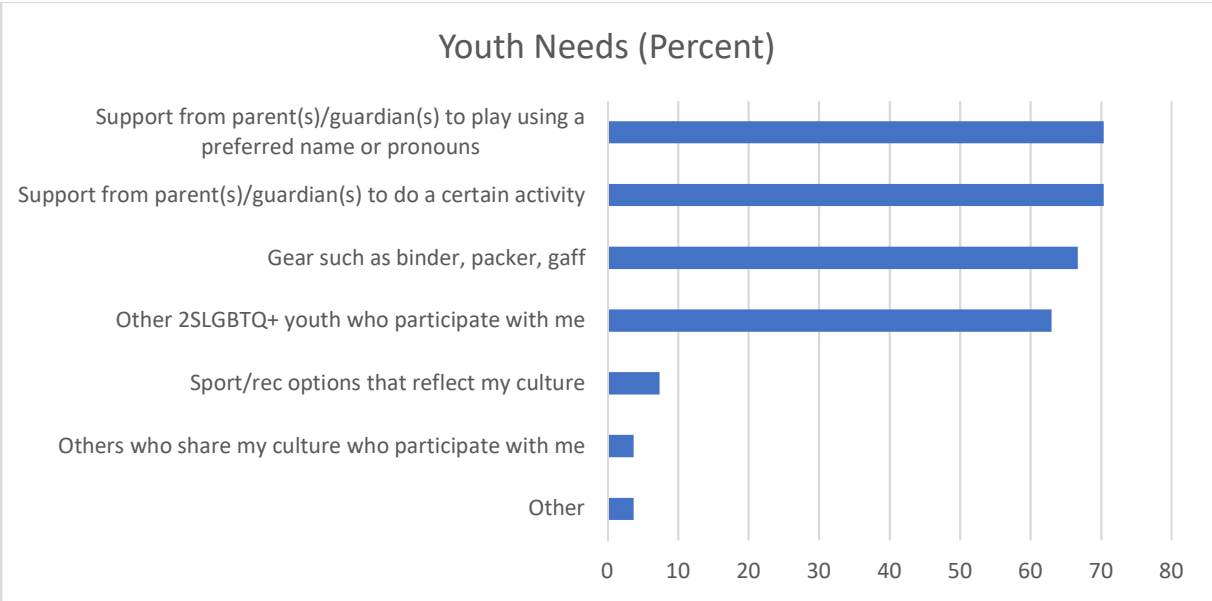
Responses related to who else was there (2 youth) e.g. “...swimming competitively...if youth my age played, participated” and “...rugby...if there were no redneck jocks”.

Responses related to attire (2 youth) e.g. “...swimming...if I had my own binder” and “...martial arts...if gis were more gender neutral”.

Within the focus group setting, one youth commented that they had had very positive and inclusive experiences within Martial Arts. This might illustrate the variation in perspectives among trans people, or perhaps point to differences amongst trainers/locations or another factor within the same sport.

Please check all that apply- Something I need to feel comfortable at sports in terms of sexual orientation/gender identity is:

27 responses



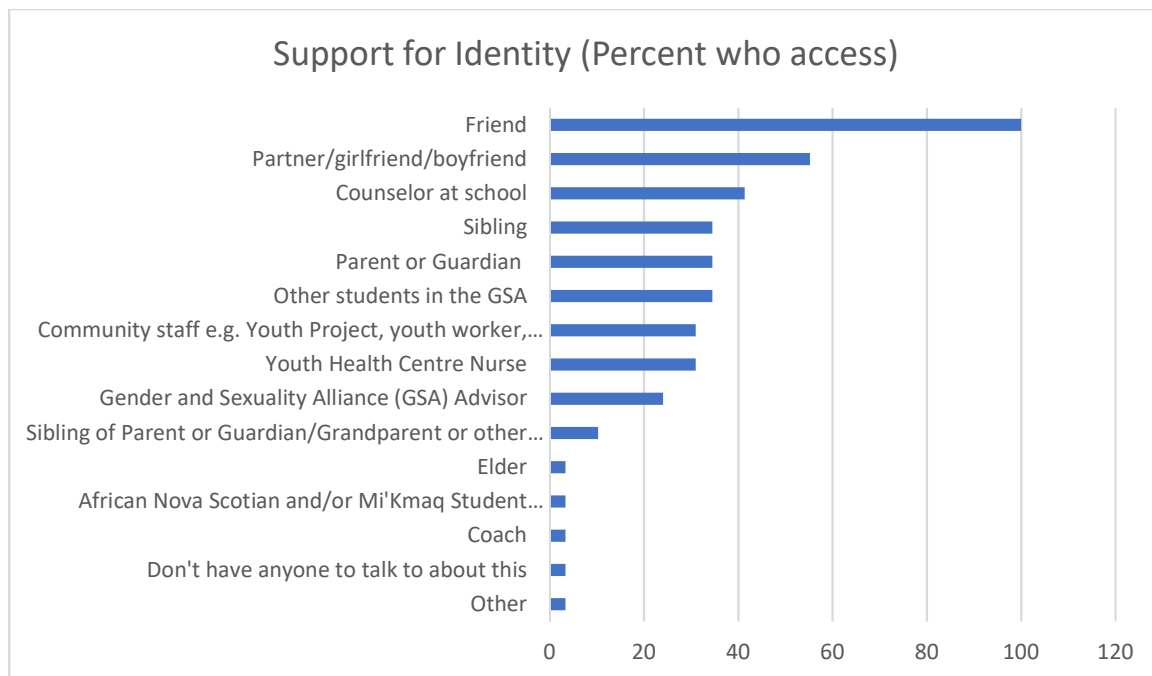
Gear such as binders, gaff, and packers are clothing items which give the appearance of a more ‘female’ or ‘male’ shape. Binders and gaffs are available free of charge for youth 25 and under from The Youth Project.

Support Systems
Support Network

Please check all that apply - If I need to talk about something to do with sexual orientation/gender identity, I would most likely talk to:

29 responses

*See glossary



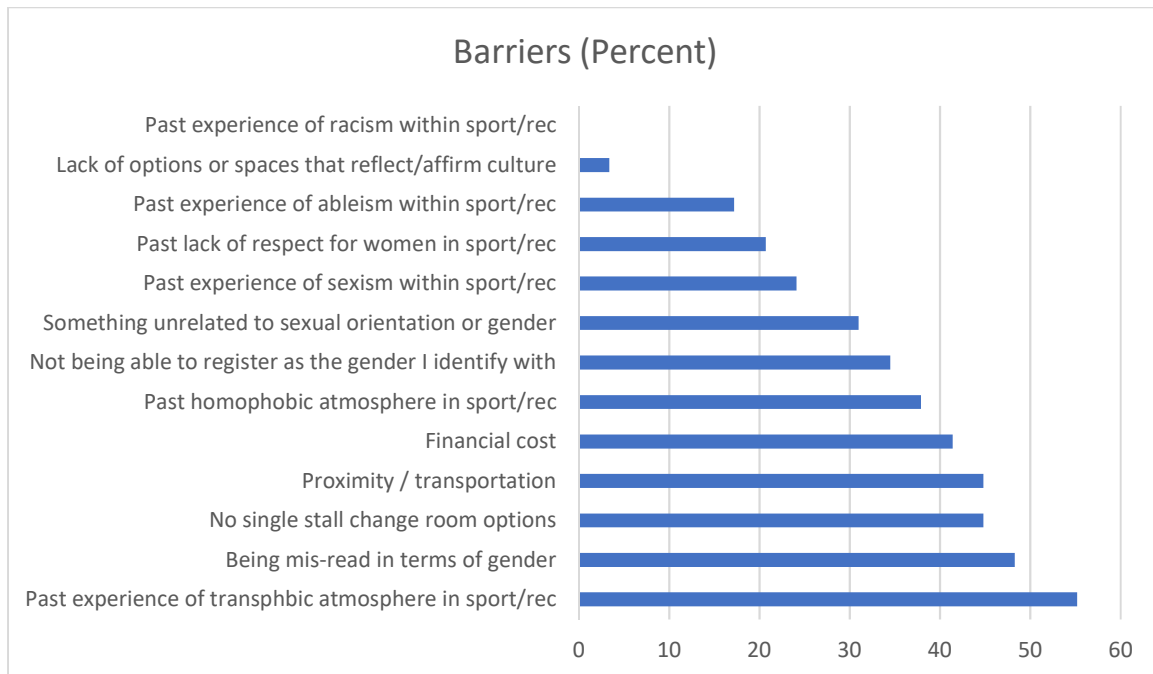
The most common place for trans youth to turn when they need to talk about something to do with sexual orientation or gender identity appears to be a friend (100% of youth) followed by partner/girlfriend/boyfriend (55.2%). This suggests that information or support aimed at friends or partners may be a valuable way to reach and support trans youth. The third most common source of support was a Counselor who meets the youth at school (41%). More youth reported they would talk to a counselor at school compared to community staff such as private counselor or counselor located at the IWK. This may be because youth can access school-based counselors without transportation or parental consent. It may also be because the counselor at school is more familiar and therefore more comfortable and/or less stigmatizing for the youth. The number of youth who report they would talk to a community-based staff suggests that about a third of youth are connected to a community group, such as the Youth Project, or a community-based counselor. The number of trans youth who see a community-based counselor may be high because many of the social workers who provide hormone readiness assessments to youth are based within the IWK. It would be interesting to explore trans youth experiences with counselors in different settings or different types of counselors, to see what types of issues youth sought counseling for in different settings.

Support Systems

Barriers / Facilitators to Participation

Choose the top three items - The biggest thing that stops me from being more active is:

29 responses

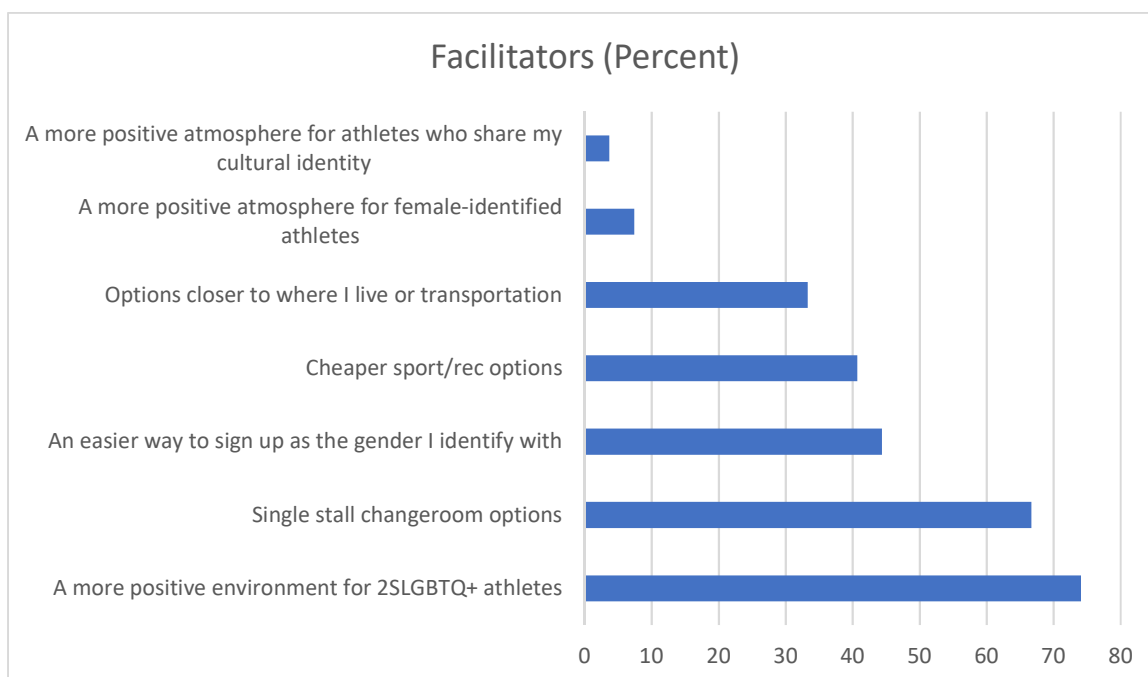


Unfortunately, there was a discrepancy within the wording of the survey questions about barriers/facilitators reported on pages 24-25. Youth were instructed to check only three items in the question itself but to check all that apply in the description below the question. Thus, some youth may have chosen their top three while others may have indicated more than three.

Among the top barriers were: past experience of transphobia, being mis-read in terms of gender, lack of single stall change room options, no good options close to place or residence or lack of transportation, and financial cost of the activity. No youth indicated that past experience of racism in sport/rec stopped them from being more active. This could be because they have experienced it but found other ways to cope other than avoiding the activity. Since most survey respondents were white they would also be less likely to experience direct racism. Another possibility is that respondents did not identify racism even though they experienced it, due to internalized power structures in both white people and racialized people. Youth may have also interpreted this question to refer to incidents of racism between individuals, rather than systemic examples such as e.g. number or opening hours of rec facilities built in neighbourhoods populated by a higher percentage of African Nova Scotians compared to other areas, for instance, or rate of promotions within sport/rec facilities management of people of colour. One youth (3.4%) reported that lack of options or spaces that reflect and affirm cultural identity was a barrier. Thus, despite lack of endorsement of racism as a barrier at least one youth identified the importance of sport/rec options which reflect and affirm culture. Six youth reported “other” reasons. These were: too lazy (2 youth), lack of gas money, intimidating cis assholes, fear of failure, and working out while binding is painful. Youth who reported homophobia as a barrier comprised 37.9% of respondents vs. 55.2 % who reported transphobia to be a barrier. This is notable since the majority of youth (at least 23 / 32) identified as something other than heterosexual. That number may be higher but is unknown since 9 youth did not fill out the question regarding sexual orientation. Thus, even in a sample of largely non-heterosexual youth, homophobia was perceived to be relatively less of a barrier to participation than transphobia.

Choose the three top items - The biggest thing that would help me be more active is:

27 responses



Five youth provided additional reasons. These were: if I was less anxious, if sports were made more accessible, if sports were less violent, a more positive atmosphere, and if sports weren't separated by gender.

Conclusion

Future Research

Trans people have significant, immediate needs in areas such as health care, mental health, employment, and housing⁵. All in for Sport itself evolved from an endeavor which was intended to more directly address some of these needs. Trans people who are women, non-binary, racialized, and/or differently abled face additional barriers. Consider what ends a tentative research project hopes to achieve, and whether those ends can be reached through an alternate route (e.g. advocacy, education, support) that would help to meet the immediate needs of the proposed research subjects.

This report presents a body of data on trans youth experiences in sport/rec based on surveys and a focus group which were completed on August 10, 2018. Open-ended responses were group into qualitative categories. Numerical responses were reported in terms of the percentage or number of respondents. The data set obtained could be used in a thesis project by a student who wishes to carry out statistical calculations and/or add additional questions. Data could be collected to

assess change over time, or to expand the respondent group to include more trans feminine youth or people of different ages for instance.

Additional analyses using the current data come to mind. For instance, data from Statistics Canada³ based on activity level amongst girls and boys suggests that younger youth are more active than older youth. I wonder what the trend would be for trans youth. It is possible that trans youth prior to puberty and older trans youth who may have started cross-sex hormones may experience less discomfort related to their bodies and therefore may be more active. Stats Canada also reports that boys are more active, on average, than girls. These numbers ignore the existence of non-binary youth altogether. I wonder what the trend might be amongst a group of trans youth. Rates of physical activity amongst trans boys, trans girls, and non-binary youth could all be compared to national Averages reported by Stats Can. One could argue that rates of activity among trans girls would be comparable to that of cis girls, and rates of activity among trans boys comparable to that of cis boys. One could also argue that the impact of being ‘socialized female’ or ‘socialized male’ – that is, social pressures applied based on birth sex – could shape people’s behaviour, with fewer hours of physical activity for trans boys compared to cis boys for instance.

Looking back, I may have missed some variables related to physical activity which would be important to include if a researcher wished to compare rates of activity between cis and trans youth, or better understand what impacts trans youth participation in sports/rec. Firstly, in retrospect I would have included a question regarding physical mobility. In relation to the current results, most facilities in the camp are wheelchair accessible and no youth arrived with visible mobility aids. Questions around hearing or vision differences would also be relevant to participation in sports/rec. Secondly, Stats Can also reports that parent activity level is a predictor of physical activity, thus, it could be interesting in a future study to include this as a variable. There may be other important variables that impact physical activity which would be important to include.

Additional questions which could be included in future studies also come to mind. It would be interesting to include a measure of length of time living as identified gender, similar to the Being Safe Being Me² survey. By including a measure of length of time living in identified gender it could give the researcher an idea of the length of time the person had experienced different social pressures. It is bit like asking ‘is it nature vs. nurture’ to ask how much of one’s behaviour is due to being socialized in one gender, and how much is due to one’s own identity. Perhaps more work on trans people’s experiences in general is needed, as a basis for understanding how length of time living in one’s identified gender affects a person. In my opinion the stages of change model has potential relevance for trans people’s experiences. I based the questions on coming out experiences on this model.

Future work could also include measures of gender dysphoria and body image, and then compare this with rates of physical activity, avoidance of ‘gendered spaces’ etc. I suspect that comfort in one’s gender does not always correlate with positive body image, but that most trans people who have a negative body image also have some degree of gender dysphoria.

Consistency of pronoun use was intended as a measure of “passing*”. In retrospect, it would have been more specific to ask, “do you ‘pass’?”. A question around physical transition options may also provide information about passing, however, since hormones affect people differently it would be difficult to draw conclusions based on this. It is the opinion of the author that most trans people have an accurate self perception of whether they “pass” and are acutely aware of this. One could then analyze whether avoidance/leaving was correlated with degree of “passing for instance. “Passing” could also be correlated with preference in changeroom signage or layout.

Considerations for Youth Programming

The following five simple considerations could make a world of difference for athletes in your program. These recommendations may change over time as trans people’s place in society continues to evolve.

- An inclusive climate matters for participation in sports/rec

A positive atmosphere for 2SLGBTQ+ youth is not only a human rights or social justice issue – it could impact how much trans youth participate physical activity. Youth identified a more positive atmosphere for 2SLGBTQ+ athletes as *the #1 thing* that would help them participate more in physical activity. Youth identified past experiences of transphobia in sport/rec as *the #1 thing* which stopped them from being more active. A more positive atmosphere for 2SLGBTQ+ youth and past experiences of transphobia ranked higher than past experiences of homophobia, financial cost, having activities close to home or transportation, past experience of sexism, ableism, or racism in sport/rec.

- Trans youth feel more comfortable when Phys-ed teachers handle transphobic comments directly, in class

More than half of trans youth do not currently perceive the Gymnasium to be a ‘safe space,’ and feel uncomfortable approaching their Phys-ed teacher about situations related to gender and sexuality based on survey results. When asked to rate how safe they felt in different school locations, less than half of trans youth reported they sometimes or always feel safe in the gymnasium. Handling/preventing transphobic comments or incidents is one way to increase youth participation was identified as important by youth in the focus group. Youth emphasized it is best to respond to transphobic comments in the setting itself rather than refer on to the office. Responses on pages 20 – 22 of this report give a good sense of some ‘real life’ scenarios that might be encountered which staff may wish to prepare for.

- Your facility really needs to have a single stall washroom

Over 75% of trans youth report they have avoided or refused to participate in an activity because they did not want to deal with using a shared changeroom. Over 80% report that they rarely or never feel safe in the washroom or changeroom. Of the youth who reported on coping strategies, close to two thirds reported that they avoid or leave the situation, or isolate themselves within the setting when they feel unsafe. Lack of single stall change rooms tied for the third most commonly-reported barrier to participation. Access to single stall change rooms was the second

most commonly-reported facilitator to participation. This paints a strong picture of the importance of a private changing space in trans youth participation. If your building lacked a piece of sports equipment that three quarters of your students needed in order to play, would you advocate for it? Think of the change room like any other piece of equipment necessary for student performance.

- Use the name and pronouns that “out” youth identify with

It is common sense and has been said elsewhere that using a trans person’s name and pronouns is a basic way to show respect. All in for Sport results are consistent with this. A simple way to do this during ice breaker activities is to ask players to state their name and pronouns if they wish, and to model this yourself during your own introduction. In sport / rec settings, when registration is required there should also be *a way to register with a preferred name* rather than a legal name. There should also be *a space for youth to indicate their pronouns*.

- The format of Dance, Gymnastics, Active Games, and Active Pursuits can make a difference

It appears that when trans youth participate “with friends” compared to “at school” *the number of youth who enjoy all four activities doubles*. When trans youth participate “alone” the number of youth who enjoy dance, gymnastics and active pursuits shows a further increase. Ten or more trans youth (out of a possible thirty-two) reported they enjoy the following activities:

- dancing alone; dancing with friends
- active games with friends; active games in the community with other 2SLGBTQ+ youth
- active pursuits alone; active pursuits with friends

In discussions and open-ended questions, youth indicated they enjoyed a range of sports, including rugby, swimming, lacrosse, soccer, martial arts, and basketball. Trans youth also stated they ‘just want to be treated like everyone else’.

Glossary

Abrosexual: An individual that has a fluid and/or rapidly changing sexuality that fluctuates between different sexualities⁶

Androsexual: Someone who has sexual leanings towards males or androgynous people⁶

Cisgender: “Having a gender identity that is congruent with one’s biological sex (for example, both biological sex and gender identity are female)”⁷

Coming Out: “The process through which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people acknowledge and express their sexual orientation and gender identities and integrate this knowledge into their personal and social lives. (2) The act of disclosure to others, as in, “I just came out to my parents.” Coming out is a complex, selective, and ongoing process.”⁷

Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA): Student-driven club which supports “students across the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender, questioning, and many others), including those who identify as allies. GSAs are known for providing safe and inclusive spaces for students to talk about their experiences. They also facilitate awareness of LGBTQ issues in schools.”⁷

Gender identity: “A person’s internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither. Gender identity refers to a person’s internal experience that cannot be determined by others. A person’s gender identity is different from their sexual orientation.”⁷

Misgender: To label/refer to someone in gendered terms other than those with which the person self identifies. Often has social-emotional consequences for the person who is misgendered.

Non-binary: An umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively male or female

Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project (NSRAP): advocacy group founded in 1995 to advance equity, justice, and human rights for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Nova Scotia.

Panromantic asexual: a person that can be romantically attracted to all genders, but is not sexually attracted to others.⁶

Pansexual: a person that can be sexually attracted to all genders⁶

Passing: When people treat a trans person the same way they treat a cisgender person because they have assumed that the trans person is cisgender.

Pronoun: A word used in place of gender identity e.g. he, she, they, hir, ze

Queer: An umbrella term for any sexual orientation or gender identity other than straight or cisgender. Historically this word was used as an insult but more recently some people self-identify with the word in a positive way.

References

1. Grades 4 – 6 Physical Education curriculum Nova Scotia
https://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/curriculum/physed_4-6_streamlined.pdf
2. Being Safe Being Me Trans Youth Health Survey

Veale J, Saewyc E, Frohard-Dourlent H, Dobson S, Clark B & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group (2015). *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey*. Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia.

http://apsc-saravyc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2018/03/SARAVYC_Trans-Youth-Health-Report_EN_Final_Web2.pdf
3. Physical activity of Canadian children and youth, Statistics Canada released Oct. 2017
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017034-eng.htm>
4. Scheim A, Bauer G, Pyne J. *Avoidance of Public Spaces by Trans Ontarians: The Impact of Transphobia on Daily Life*. Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 16 January, 2014. 4(1). \ <http://transpulseproject.ca/research/avoidance-of-public-spaces-by-trans-ontarians-the-impact-of-transphobia-on-daily-life/>
5. TransPulse research and study results
<http://transpulseproject.ca/research/>
6. Urban Dictionary
7. Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth
https://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20for%20Supporting%20Transgender%20Students_0.pdf